Saskatchewan
Agriculture
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ADF

AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT FUND

FINAL REPORT

20040476

DEVELOPMENT AND COMMERCIALIZATION OF A NOVEL FOOD PRODUCT

Funded by: The Agriculture Development Fund

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Prepared by: Thomson Meats Ltd.

FINAL REPORT

PROJECT NUMBER: 20040476

PROJECT TITLE: Development and Commercialization of a Novel Food Product

Summary

The objective of this project was *"To develop and commercialize a home meal solution item for test marketing in the Canadian retail market."* Thomson Meats Ltd. (TML) was successful in meeting this objective by developing a product entitled "Cabbage Roll Links" (Links). This item is currently available in over 200 Federated & Calgary Co-op retail venues. Without the support from ADF, the development of this product to this extent may not have been possible.

The observation of this item thus far is that both the retail buyers and further, the consumer have accepted it very favorably. The Links have performed well in demonstrations-in fact one retailer could not perform another demonstration as they had run out of the product. The continuation of this Project is that the Links will be further distributed across Western Canada via additional retailer channels. Currently, a test size package is being developed for big box wholesaler. Once the initial variety has proven successful, TML will expand the product line by introducing additional flavors and will be monitored accordingly.

Technical Report

The following is a description of the work completed throughout this Project:

Project Activities:

- *Evaluation & formation of products & process*

-What will the product be, what will it be called, who is going to process it, shelf-life, fresh vs. frozen…

- *Label development*

-Will this be provided in-house; what is the design; what will the packaging look like, what will the packaging be (box, bag, etc.)…

- *Modification of processing procedures*

-Alterations of flavor, texture, ratio of meat to rice, and links to sauce..

- *Prototyping*

-Preparing product to take to the retail buyers

- *Presentation to retailers*

-Meeting with different buyers at various locations including Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg & Vancouver…

- *Refinement of products to meet retailers demands*

-Changing flavor, texture, meat to rice ratio, label, packaging…

- *Shelf testing, microbial analysis, & nutritional analysis*

-Requirement for packaging & for retailers needs

- *Submission of labels to CFIA for approval*

-Required before product can enter the grocery stream

- *Transfer of technology for in-house production*

-Learning production process for transfer

- *Interim processing & test market*

-Manufacturing of product at The Food Centre to prepare for test market retail sales and demonstrations during this launch period.

- *Evaluation & modifications*

-Further amendments if required depending on test market feedback; follow-up visits with retail buyers

Below, are examples of specific activities undergone per month:

- **November:**
  20 CRL Demonstrations
  Sales Presentations big box wholesale and retail in Vancouver
  Sales Presentations Caldco (for Eastern Canada market) in Vancouver
  Sales Presentations 3 largest Alberta retailers in Calgary
- **December:**
  Sales Presentations larger retailer Meat & Deli in Edmonton
- December/January:
  Sales Presentations Eastern Banners
  January-March:
  30 Demonstrations at FCL & Calgary Co-op locations
  Additional retail and big box wholesaler presentations
- **April:**
  Demo at Grocery Showcase West in Vancouver

Results & Conclusions:

As elluded to above, the end result of this Project was the development of the new product-Links for the retail sector. To date, the acceptance of this item has exceeded TML's expectations. However, the product will be further presented to additional venues and sales monitored. One of the benefits of the concept of this item is that many different flavor profiles can be introduced once the consumer has become familiar with the initial product itself. Cabbage Rolls are not a new concept however, presented in such a form that TML has introduced, is. It could even become a category "Cooked Rice Sausage and Sauce", ie "Wild Rice & Bison" with mushroom sauce; and so on.

With any new product, there is a certain protocol that a processor must follow to ensure that the item sees itself brought forth into the marketplace. By following the appropriate guidelines, this resulted in TML's new product not only being able to enter the food marketplace but also be accepted. These guidelines (outlining the R & D process) not

only apply to this novel food product but will be referenced when additional products are added to TML's product portfolio.

Potential impact on Food processing industry:
This Project has many benefits to Saskatchewan's economy/agriculture via the food processing industry:

- *Increase of value-added processing in this sector.*
- *Improved Sustainability of TML.* TML cannot rely solely on one product for its viability. By introducing more successful products to its line, the securement of the company is better reinforced. In addition, employment at TML was able to remain steady and should only increase as sales increase with sales of the Links.
- *Diversification of TML's product portfolio.* See above paragraph.
- *Involvement of other producers & processors.* Not only was TML involved in this Project but also other Saskatchewan companies including the Saskatchewan Food Industry Development Centre. As long as the Links are being manufactured, TML will be relying on other suppliers for the ingredients and for the labeling and packaging materials.
- *Increase of Saskatchewan made products in the Canadian market.* Via the SFPA Saskatchewan made promotional program, consumers will be aware that this is another Saskatchewan product that they should feel proud about and be inclined to purchase.

Information of benefit to other processors and government:
As with the development of any new product, there are guidelines/procedures that one must follow in order to see a successful end result. In ensuing a new product, TML has been able to outline the necessary procedures required. These procedures are not only relevant to TML but to all smaller size companies that want to be involved in new product development.
The government is able to use the success of this Project in regards to how relevant its funding to smaller sized processors really is. Without extra support, companies cannot afford to endeavor new products such as this and thus end up failing as a company or relying solely on one product for its stability. It also reflects that value-added processing is still and will be important to the agriculture sector and has only positive effects on the food industry.

Equipment
TML had to initially rent the Food Centre facilities for the prototyping of the Links. However, the process will be transferred in-house to TML once smoke houses are installed at their facility.

Project Developed Materials
The final label that is used on the packaging material is being separately via an electronic file. There were no publications made at this point but product sheets may be developed for upcoming trade-shows (see below).

Project Photos

There were several photo's taken of the product in which one was chosen for the label. These have not been provided but are available if required. The final photo appears on the product packaging in which samples of the Links have previously been shipped.

Acknowledgement

As stated above, there have been no publications printed at this time. However, the Links are being presented at The Arctic Co-op Annual Trade Show, Winnipeg March 16 & 17; Grocery Showcase West in Vancouver, April 9 & 10, and Northern Grocers Annual Trade Show in Prince Albert, April 20th. Acknowledgement will be made at each of these events.